



National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society
Minnesota
Chapter

January 6, 2011

The Honorable Betty McCollum
1714 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congresswoman McCollum:

Congratulations on being sworn in to serve the people of Minnesota in the 112th Congress.

Over the past two years there has been a vibrant discussion about the need to reform America's health care system in order to expand access to high quality, affordable care. As the nation's leading voice for people with multiple sclerosis, the National MS Society adopted a set of national health reform principles. Passage in the 111th Congress of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) met a great number of those principles including:

- Prohibiting discrimination based on pre-existing conditions
- Prohibiting lifetime limits on coverage amounts
- Expanding the Medicaid program
- Subsidies for those unable to afford insurance on their own
- Limiting out of pocket expenses
- Providing access to long term care supports and services, and the enactment of an optional long term care program

Multiple sclerosis is a neurological disease that results in a physical disability for many people living with it. Our work centers both on researching the cause of and cure for MS, and meeting the needs of people living with MS. The Affordable Care Act goes a long way to provide relief for those struggling to get care, or to afford the care they already receive.

In many ways, the ACA is just the first real step in reforming our health care system. It is the culmination of a century-long effort championed by presidents from Teddy Roosevelt to Richard Nixon to Bill Clinton. It is not a perfect law and we support efforts by Congress to refine it and improve upon its core provisions, but to repeal the Affordable Care Act would be a significant step backward.

We encourage you and your colleagues to stand firm against efforts to repeal this important legislation. We instead encourage you and others to work together to improve upon the existing law and address deficiencies that have been identified since its passage.

The ACA is of course rendered meaningless if appropriate levels of funding aren't forthcoming and therefore we also encourage Congress to properly fund this law. De-funding or under-funding its provisions would ensure failure of the reform effort. However, in real terms, it would result in failing those Americans who have been denied coverage due to a pre-existing condition or who have lost coverage because of reaching lifetime caps or through so-called rescissions.

Americans with disabilities and those who suffer from chronic disease are among the most vulnerable to financial ruin due to health care costs. Enactment of the Affordable Care Act was an important step toward protecting against such a result, and it was also a significant step to expand coverage to tens of millions of Americans who previously had no access to affordable care.

Multiple sclerosis and other neurological diseases have no party affiliation and no political agendas. As an organization, our goal is to find a cure for MS. As an advocate for those with MS, we support public policy measures that improve access to high quality, affordable health care including affordable prescription drug coverage. To that end, we oppose repeal of the Affordable Care Act and hope that you can work with your colleagues to further improve upon the legislation already enacted.

Thank you for your consideration, and thank you for your service to the people of Minnesota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ted Thompson", with a stylized, flowing script.

Ted Thompson
Senior Vice President
Public Policy & Mission Advancement